

CHAPTER 3

LAND USE ISSUES

1. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Introduction

Roanoke County encourages citizen participation in all elements of the government. The challenge is to keep the level of citizen interest high and to make their active participation in the workings of their government as convenient and easy as possible.

The participation of an informed citizenry is a critical element in the success of this community plan and of other County initiatives. This plan reflects the hopes and desires of County citizens for the future and is dependent on their continued support, diligence and commitment.

Goal

To achieve the highest possible level of citizen participation in all elements of Roanoke County government by keeping our citizens informed and educated on public policy issues and by maintaining an open, democratic, and easily accessible governmental system.

Issues and Opportunities

- The Roanoke Valley government and public education television channel (RVTV) provides information on local government issues for Roanoke County, the City of Roanoke and the Town of Vinton in addition to broadcasting City Council and County Board of Supervisors meetings. It also provides a bulletin board of announcements concerning job opportunities, upcoming events, tax information, etc.
- RVTV is not available to the entire county population due to cable access constraints.
- For the most part, there are not major neighborhood concerns or county-wide problems that citizens feel a need to unite, organize or rally around.
- When seeking input on planning initiatives, such as revisions to the zoning ordinance, it is sometimes difficult to get a broad spectrum of comments from a variety of people, groups and organizations. For example, it seems that neighborhood-based and environmental-based groups are not as well organized or financed as other special-interest groups, that because of financial interests, are highly motivated to participate in such efforts.

- As shown every year in the citizen survey that the County conducts, the vast majority of County citizens are satisfied with the level of government services they are receiving.
- Civic leagues exist in all areas of the County and are effective in getting zoning violations remedied and organizing neighborhood crime watch efforts.
- Because of the general level of satisfaction with government services, the majority of County citizens tend to be reactive rather than proactive on public policy issues.
- The County has a Deputy Assistant to the County Administrator whose major job responsibility is to assist citizens in resolving problems they may be having with a County policy, requirement or regulation.
- The County holds all public hearings and community meetings in the evenings to allow the general public to participate in them.
- The County Administrator holds quarterly meetings with the civic league presidents.
- Community meetings are often held to obtain citizen input on rezoning petitions prior to the Planning Commission public hearing.
- The County has a web page that provides information on the county government and services and linkages to other regional, state and federal government sites.
- The Community Plan citizen participation process developed neighborhood councils consisting of citizens from each of the community planning areas.

Objectives

- A. Ensure that all citizens have full and appropriate access to information concerning their government.
- B. Encourage all citizens, of all ages, to participate to the fullest extent possible in public meetings and hearings.
- C. Provide assistance to any neighborhood or community area that wants to establish a civic league.
- D. Promote the use of the most effective and efficient methods to communicate issues and policies to the citizens and to receive their input and suggestions.
- E. Treat all citizens with the utmost respect and courtesy. Listen and respond promptly to their comments and suggestions.

Implementation Strategies

1. Enhance and expand the role of the neighborhood councils. Utilize these councils to gather neighborhood input on a variety of topics such as rezoning petitions, neighborhood plans and other local issues. (Obj. B, D, E)
2. Develop and fund a County Page quarter-page notice in the Roanoke Times. This could run once a month and would provide information on public policy issues, upcoming public hearings and community meetings, road projects, etc. (Obj. A, D)
3. Expand the coverage of RVTV. (Obj. A, B, D)
4. Develop a quarterly newsletter that covers Department of Community Development issues such as planning, zoning, progress toward goals of the community plan, stormwater, drainage, roads, etc. This should be posted on the Roanoke County Home Page and distributed to organizations, civic leagues, PTA's, neighborhood councils and a general public mailing list. (Obj. A, B, D)
5. Develop a network of contact people with all neighborhood and special interest groups so that they can be notified and involved in public policy issues. (Obj. A, B, C, D, E)
6. Encourage, as part of the application process, all rezoning petitioners to hold community meetings, unless exempted by the Zoning Administrator. (Obj. A, D)
7. Once a year, hold a meeting of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in each magisterial district of the county - Hollins, Catawba, Windsor Hills, Cave Spring and Vinton. (Obj. A, B, D, E)
8. Roanoke County should provide its citizens the opportunity to interface with each other and the capability to access all community services through the latest communications technologies. (Obj. A, D)

2. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Introduction

Establishing design guidelines to promote quality development and enhance the unique character of communities within the County is an important component of Roanoke County's Community Plan. These guidelines are intended to facilitate development creativity and provide incentives for development design principles that will result in the enhancement of the visual appearance of the built environment in the County. They relate to such items as: site development, relationship of proposed land uses to adjoining land uses and buildings to adjoining buildings, relationship of buildings to their site, site layout, parking lots, landscaping, building design, lighting, and signs.

The results of the Neighborhood Council process re-enforce the idea of guiding development design with the following themes voiced by all the communities within the County:

- New development should incorporate a high standard of design including the following design elements: appropriate architecture, landscaping, and signage.
- Encourage neighborhood involvement in the design process associated with any development proposal through citizen meetings with developers.
- New developments should be designed and planned as cohesive communities.
- Incompatible land uses should be buffered from adjoining land uses.
- New developments should be required to design around existing, healthy stands of trees and/or individual specimen trees where possible, to preserve trees that are outside of the building envelope and to replace trees when existing trees must be removed.

Goal

All new and redeveloped sites are designed to be in harmony with their surroundings, improve the general appearance of the site and strengthen community identity.

Issues and Opportunities

- Design guidelines may provide a level of comfort with a proposed development that otherwise would not exist.
- Design guidelines may help assure that development reflects the unique characteristics of the community.
- The citizens of Roanoke County appear to be very supportive of design guidelines.

Objectives

- A. Develop and incorporate design guidelines for all future development in the County, excluding individual home sites and farm buildings.
- B. Involve citizens, businesses and community leaders in the creation of community specific design guidelines.

Implementation Strategies

- 1. Continue to support and expand as necessary the Hollins Village/Williamson Road redevelopment initiative using public funds as a catalyst to stimulate private investment.
- 2. Identify and ensure that the gateways into the County are attractive and enhance the community's identity.
- 3. Encourage through community meetings, public participation in the development of design guidelines for land in Roanoke County.
- 4. Provide education and outreach to the public emphasizing the importance of developing design guidelines for the County.
- 5. Be firm about goals, but flexible about how to attain them.

Land Use Designations

The Plan designates the following land use areas. Each designation has a set of design guidelines that pertain to development issues within that area.

Conservation - These areas are characterized by significant environmental and cultural features such as mountains, ridgetops, wildlife habitat, forests, rivers and lakes.

Rural Preserve and Rural Village - These areas are characterized by rural landscapes where protection of the rural character is desired.

Village Center - These rural village centers, where established crossroad communities are present, serve as focal points for the surrounding rural areas.

Neighborhood Conservation - These are established residential neighborhoods where conservation and continuation of the existing housing pattern are desired.

Development - These areas are characterized by new residential growth and a variety of housing types and densities.

Transition - These areas are corridors where current commercial strip development patterns exist or future development pressure is possible.

Core - These are commercial, retail areas where suburban centers of high intensity urban development are present or expected.

Principal Industrial - These are areas where high technology industries and research and development firms are present or may develop.

Scenic Corridors - These are areas encompassing a current or possible future designated scenic corridors.

Design Guidelines

Conservation

Certain areas within the County are designated as Conservation because of significant environmental and cultural features such as mountains, wildlife habitat, clean water resources or scenic beauty. The Conservation land use areas include part of the George Washington/Jefferson National Forest, the Appalachian Trail corridor, Havens State Wildlife Management Area, Carvin's Cove Reservoir, Spring Hollow Reservoir, Blue Ridge Parkway viewsheds, the higher elevations of Read Mountain and a County owned portion of Sugar Loaf Mountain. When the specific data is available, the viewsheds from the Appalachian Trail should be included in this designation. The primary goal of the following objectives and guidelines is to protect and preserve the inherent environmental and natural resources within the County.

Objectives

- A. To recognize existing areas within the County that fit under the Conservation land use areas and establish guidelines to protect and preserve them.
- B. Identify, evaluate and work to assure the preservation of wildlife habitats and corridors, natural landmarks, historic and archaeological sites, significant agricultural lands and examples of natural heritage. Maintain a registry of qualified areas and link decisions concerning land and easement purchases and new developments with the conservation framework established.
- C. Encourage the establishment of additional Conservation land use areas through conservation easements, greenways and parks that in the end result, create a network of interconnected Conservation areas.
- D. Provide assistance and incentives for land owners to maintain natural areas. Work with landowners and other entities to promote sound conservation practices and where

appropriate, establish cooperative management plans. Encourage private owners to investigate and utilize the preservation programs offered by other governmental entities and private foundations.

Guidelines

1. Use Conservation land use areas to preserve: critical ecosystems; scenic vistas; fish and wildlife habitats; natural resources and landmarks; outdoor recreation areas; cultural, historic and archaeological areas; connections and trails; access to public waters and other useable open space lands; scenic waterways or highway corridors; important forest lands, range lands, or agricultural lands; aquifer recharge areas and surface water.
2. Resource extraction should be carried out in a manner that preserves open space along stream corridors, minimizes the impacts on the land and is compatible with adjacent land uses. Reclamation plans should be reviewed and processes monitored to ensure the area's continued significance.
3. Isolated wetlands, stream corridors, lakes, drainage areas and their associated riparian areas should be preserved, protected and used for a variety of open space purposes such as landscape features, irrigation, water quality protection, buffers, wildlife habitat and flood control.
4. Development of any kind should be planned, designed and constructed to avoid or minimize the degradation of natural and cultural resources.
5. Minimize habitat fragmentation from the combined effects of development, roads, trails and an overall increased human presence.
6. Place adequate buffers around sensitive sites.
7. Restrict development of structures, such as residential, commercial or industrial facilities, on slopes greater than 20%. Allow passive recreational uses, such as picnic shelters, greenways and trails in these areas.
8. Restrict development within 100 feet of a water course, excluding passive recreational uses, water related recreational uses or incidental utility uses.
9. Significant scenic views should be preserved and a detailed inventory developed.

Rural Preserve and Rural Village

In those areas of Roanoke County designated as rural and/or agricultural where local officials and residents are looking for preservation options, certain design strategies can be followed. Through the use of these design strategies land will remain available for productive agricultural activities and open space, developers are not placed under any unreasonable constraints, and realtors gain a special marketing tool, in that rural views from the new homes will be guaranteed by the conservation easements.

Objectives

- A. While allowing future development, employ design strategies that leave land available for productive agricultural activities and open space.
- B. Preserve rural views and vistas.

Guidelines

- 1. Encourage cluster developments that set aside 50 to 70 percent of the parcel as open space, and preserve or incorporate existing site features into the overall design.
- 2. Require that rural subdivisions be buffered and set back from roadway view.
- 3. Decrease the number of new driveways fronting on public roads.
- 4. Decrease the obstruction of views by new developments by strategically locating buildings on the site. Locate buildings either in a wooded fringe at the edge of field or set back and buffer them from fields and public roads through the use of landscaping.
- 5. Buildings located on prominent mountain sides should use exterior colors and textures to aid in them blending into the landscape.
- 6. Discourage the siting of buildings on ridge lines.

Village Center

There are numerous Village Centers throughout the rural and suburban areas of Roanoke County. These centers are established crossroad communities which have traditionally served as focal points for the surrounding area. They play a functional role in providing homes, limited neighborhood- oriented commercial services and businesses, and civic buildings such as churches, post offices, fire stations and schools. Many of the Village Centers in Roanoke County contain historic structures and/or sites, which should be preserved through local historic district zoning. These Village Centers each have a unique character and sense of place with which local residents easily identify.

Objectives

- A. Collaborate with community members to develop design guidelines for Village Centers to protect and enhance the existing village character and historic qualities.
- B. Establish provisions which allow for limited mixed-use development in existing Village Centers, and permit the future development of additional Village Centers in appropriate locations throughout the County.

Guidelines

1. Design and build new construction to blend in with the existing buildings in the village. New construction should be compatible with the existing village in respect to height, size, character, massing, roof shapes, material, and door/window proportions.
2. Locate and cluster institutional services at Village Centers to enhance community identity.
3. When existing buildings create a characteristically close relationship with the street, retain this pattern in order to preserve the community's character.
4. Reduce the visual impacts of parking areas upon community character through placement, landscaping and buffering requirements.
5. Screen open storage areas, exposed machinery, and outdoor areas used for storage from roads and surrounding land uses.
6. Preserve roadside trees due to their important role in defining the character of a community and encourage the planting of new roadside trees.
7. Design exterior lighting and signs as integral architectural elements of the building and site.
8. Control lighting in both height and intensity to maintain village character. Shield luminaries to prevent excessive lighting and glare beyond lot lines.
9. Encourage compatibility or shared use of signs for adjacent businesses. Maintain good scale and proportion in sign design and in visual relationships to buildings, surroundings and views.
10. Encourage the re-use of historic structures.
11. Create historic district overlay zoning for appropriate village centers.

Neighborhood Conservation

Single-family neighborhoods are traditionally the most protected land uses. The strategic placement of non-residential land uses, such as parks, schools, libraries and churches (determined by neighborhood preference and need) can play a vital role in preserving and enhancing neighborhood character. Also, creative site planning practices can enhance the opportunity for attached housing to achieve compatibility with adjacent detached housing.

Objective

- A. Preserve and enhance the existing character of established neighborhoods through boundary protection and the addition of desired amenities.

Guidelines

- 1. Screen and buffer adjacent non-compatible land uses.
- 2. Incorporate greenways within neighborhoods as well as from neighborhoods to adjacent institutional services, other neighborhoods and commercial centers.
- 3. Encourage infill of vacant lots with similar density housing.
- 4. Any additions or changes to existing neighborhoods should be compatible with established (underlying) site patterns.
- 5. Allow well-designed low impact service oriented businesses to locate near neighborhoods.

Development

These areas of new residential growth have the most opportunity for innovative land development practices. Cluster developments with a mix of housing types and densities, limited retail support, and efficient layout of streets can prevent sprawl and create self-contained neighborhoods with combined living and working areas. These areas also respond to the current needs and demands of smaller families and energy/resource conservation. The protection and inclusion of environmental processes and natural site amenities, such as drainage systems and vegetation, should be priorities for all new developments.

Objectives

- A. Encourage the development of planned residential communities and cluster developments that protect and incorporate environmental features and resources within the developed area.
- B. Within the development areas, plan for an interconnected framework of greenways, parks and activity/retail centers.

Guidelines

1. Take an inventory of all environmental features and resources present on site in order to create a site development plan that is able to preserve and benefit from the existing natural features.
2. Use those existing site features to create a common framework within a mix of housing types and densities.
3. Retail support should be located in central locations, easily accessible by car, bike or foot.
4. Lay out streets in an efficient manner, but avoid creating main thoroughfares that can attract heavy amounts of traffic.
5. Neighborhoods should be easily identifiable; create gateways at major entrance points.
6. Create common recreational open space for all neighborhood residents.
7. Protect, and enhance when possible, scenic views to and from the site.

Transition

Certain roadways within the County have become or have the potential of becoming primary corridors where current strip development pressures exist. Within these corridors access and aesthetics should be controlled in order to avoid unappealing forms of commercial strip development and the resultant traffic congestion.

Objective

- A. Establish development and design guidelines for future development along designated key road corridors and gateways into the County.

Guidelines

1. Support and expand the public-private partnerships in the redevelopment of older commercial corridors in the County.
2. Establish provisions which discourage strip development along corridors and promote planned development nodes located at major road junctions.
3. Redevelopment of existing strip developments should stress the importance of reducing the number of entrances, coordinating signage and parking and increasing vegetative buffers.

4. Encourage the interconnection of parking lots and the reduction of driveways along primary, arterial and collector roads.
5. Coordinate vehicular and pedestrian movement among adjacent sites.
6. Preserve, enhance, and/or incorporate into the design natural site resources such as topography, vegetation, views to and from the site and drainage ways.
7. Plan the site to provide a desirable transition with the streetscape. Provide space for adequate planting, safe pedestrian movement, and screened parking areas. Provide an inviting atmosphere for the pedestrian through grades of walks, parking spaces, terraces, and other paved areas.
8. Buffer along rear property lines where development backs up to less intensive residential uses.
9. Design exterior lighting and signs as integral architectural elements of the building and site. Encourage compatibility or shared use of signs for adjacent businesses. Maintain good scale and proportion in sign design and in visual relationships to buildings, surroundings and views.
10. Ensure unity of landscape design by repetition of appropriate plants that are indigenous to the area through coordination with adjacent properties.
11. Buffer adjacent incompatible land uses by landscaping, earth berms, walls and fences or combinations of these elements. Use landscaping to enhance architectural features and viewsheds and provide shade.
12. Provide incentives to utility companies to place newly installed utility services and service revisions necessitated by exterior alterations underground where possible.

Core

Core areas by nature have the potential of becoming congested and visually cluttered districts. Therefore, it is essential that in these areas property owners establish common planning goals in new developments and redeveloping areas to ensure safe, accessible, and visually pleasing Core areas.

Objectives

- A. For each respective Core area, establish common characteristics that will ensure ease of travel and visual coherence.
- B. Encourage the redevelopment of congested Core areas.
- C. Encourage the development of high density residential that is integrated with commercial development.
- D. Create pedestrian-oriented Core areas to ease traffic congestion.
- E. Concentrate intensive commercial uses into one area rather than in long linear corridors.
- F. Develop strategies to accommodate large box retail uses.

Guidelines

- 1. Common links between adjacent sites and land uses should be made whenever possible to ensure connectiveness in these areas of high intensity urban uses.
- 2. Site-to-site movement for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles should be easy and safe.
- 3. Encourage the interconnection of parking lots and the reduction of driveways along primary, arterial and collector roads.
- 4. Building size, shape, height, and materials should complement adjacent buildings.
- 1. Natural site amenities, especially slopes, trees and drainage, should be conserved to the maximum practical extent.
- 6. Create common areas as buffers along the edges of Core areas that adjoin less intensive land uses.
- 7. Designate and establish landmarks - public buildings, monuments, squares and mini-parks - to strengthen the identity of community Core areas.
- 8. Design exterior lighting and signs as integral architectural elements of the building, site and Core area. Encourage compatibility or shared use of signs for adjacent businesses. Maintain good scale and proportion in sign design and in visual relationships to buildings, surroundings and views.
- 9. Encourage the siting of communication antennae and dishes on existing or new structures rather than on stand-alone towers.

10. Research and develop design and site development strategies to accommodate large box retail uses and allow them to have a positive relationship to the surrounding community.

Principal Industrial

Through innovative planning practices, many industrial areas can become beneficial to adjacent areas, providing jobs for nearby residents and customers for commercial areas.

Objectives

- A. Create industrial districts that use environmental design practices in their development and become assets to surrounding neighborhoods.
- B. Encourage cluster developments within industrial districts, combining industries, support retail and open space.

Guidelines

1. Inventory existing site natural features and resources as a first step in development.
2. Protect and utilize natural features and resources wherever deemed helpful in combating the negative aspects that industrial developments create, such as noise, air emissions, waste discharge, and increased runoff.
3. Where industrial development is adjacent to residential areas, apply exceptional design measures to achieve compatibility.
4. Provide direct access to sufficient capacity public streets.
5. Avoid slopes in excess of 15% for building sites.
6. Take advantage of slopes to break up large parking areas.
7. Plan for trees in parking lots to provide shade (at least one per 20 spaces).
8. Consider the use of pervious pavement for large parking areas.
9. Provide buffering for adjacent land uses in the form of a vegetative screen, open space or a communal greenway.
10. Allow opportunities for industrial site employees' to use alternative modes of travel, such as biking or walking.
11. Encourage the siting of communication antennae and dishes on existing or new structures

rather than on stand-alone towers.

Scenic Corridors

Throughout the County there are important corridors where access, aesthetics and future development should be managed in order to preserve scenic rural views and vistas.

Objectives

- A. Preserve identified critical scenic views along the Blue Ridge Parkway, Appalachian Trail, Roanoke River and other scenic corridors. Vistas and overlooks should be protected from the encroachment of development and signage.
- B. Preserve the scenic integrity of important road corridors and historic sites throughout the County.
- C. Designate scenic routes throughout the County where development and design standards can be applied to protect important natural views and vistas.
- D. Create overlay protection zones for these scenic corridors.

Guidelines

- 1. Produce viewshed maps, as seen when traveling the corridor, to delineate the boundaries of the corridor protection area.
- 2. Limit the number of access points to adjoining properties by combining driveways.
- 3. Create a minimum 25 foot natural landscape buffer along the corridor.
- 4. Limit construction to relatively flat areas (less than 15%) on properties adjoining the road.
- 5. Consolidate small lots into large parcels to encourage unified development and site planning.
- 6. Within the scenic corridor, limit structure height to a maximum of 25 feet.
- 7. Identify major public view points in which prospective developers must develop in accordance with adopted design standards.
- 8. Discourage the placement of broadcast towers along scenic roads or in scenic viewsheds.

3. NEIGHBORHOODS

Introduction

Our basic instincts and human nature seek a sense of community, a sense of place where we live, work and play. In Roanoke County, neighborhoods are the backbone of the community. Residents of the County identify very closely to their own neighborhoods and especially to their elementary school districts. This is exemplified by the high attendance at elementary school Parent Teacher Association meetings and youth sports events, festivals and social events that are held at the neighborhood level.

The results of the 1995 visioning citizen survey showed that residents associate more closely with their own subdivisions and neighborhoods than with the County as a whole. This makes it very important to preserve community meeting places such as neighborhood schools, fire and rescue buildings, community centers and community stores. These meeting places serve the same function as neighborhood taverns in more urban locales. It also becomes more critical to preserve those natural, historical and cultural features of a neighborhood that lend uniqueness and that feeling of being home - a sense of place - to the area.

Many neighborhoods in Roanoke County are reaching middle-age - they were built in the late 50's, 60's and early 70's. These communities provide an abundant source of good, affordable housing to citizens throughout this region. It is important to preserve the stability of these areas by finding creative ways to maintain property appearances and housing integrity, thereby maintaining property values in these communities.

Some older Roanoke County neighborhoods will continue to feel pressure for redevelopment as large tracts of commercial property become harder and harder to find. It is important to encourage community redevelopment and infill development along appropriate road systems and in appropriate commercial service areas.

If we as a community are successful in managing growth - encouraging and directing growth toward those areas of the County that can support it - preserving viewsheds and open space and retaining an agricultural base, we need to recognize that there will be more and more pressure for infill development and the redevelopment of existing sites in the more urban areas of the County. This will require some changes in densities and uses in what used to be stable neighborhoods and must be done with appropriate design guidelines, citizen input and the involvement of commercial interests.

Goal

Continue to recognize the importance of Roanoke County neighborhoods and work to preserve the institutions and natural, cultural and historical features that help to define these communities.

Issues and Opportunities

- Many Roanoke County neighborhoods have active civic leagues and community watch programs. In addition, as a part of the Community Plan process, neighborhood councils were formed in each of the twelve community planning areas around the County.
- Roanoke County elementary school Parent Teacher Associations often have participation at the one-hundred percent level.
- There is a long-term tradition and commitment to neighborhood schools in Roanoke County.
- Many Roanoke County neighborhoods were built almost 40 years ago. These areas are, to some extent, beginning to show their age and require more and more maintenance and upkeep.
- The older neighborhoods in the County provide a good source of affordable housing.
- Some of the older Roanoke County neighborhoods, that are located in close proximity to commercial centers and primary road access, are subject to redevelopment pressures from commercial interests.
- Most Roanoke County neighborhoods are very dependent on the automobile with very limited pedestrian trails and sidewalks.
- County neighborhoods tend to be very stable.
- There are only a few neighborhoods in the County that have a mix of residential densities or commercial uses.
- The strong economic base of the County has meant that property values are steadily increasing.
- Youth sports events - such as little league, soccer and softball - are great opportunities for neighborhood friends and acquaintances to meet and greet.
- The Roanoke Valley provides a beautiful and relatively clean place to live.
- There are a good variety of housing options and price ranges in the County.
- Some types of housing and housing communities, such as cluster developments and mixed-use developments, are not widely available in the County.

- The County has a high quality of life that manifests itself in low crime, little traffic congestion, abundant natural resources and good schools.
- There are some areas of the County where substandard housing exists.
- There are not “housing maintenance or upkeep” provisions in the County zoning ordinance, County Code or Building Code. It is sometimes difficult to correct problems of this nature.

Objectives

- A. Protect the uniqueness and special characteristics of each Roanoke County neighborhood.
- B. Protect the scenic beauty of Roanoke County while allowing for appropriate economic development.
- C. Require land development patterns that preserve open space.
- D. Ensure that all Roanoke County citizens have access to safe and affordable housing.
- E. Protect the property values of all citizens.
- F. Promote the use of a “liveable traffic” design model - one that values neighborhood appearance, saleability and pedestrian friendly aspects of transportation equally with ease of traffic movements.
- G. Provide all County residents easy access to community parks, ballfields and greenways.
- H. Encourage alternative modes of transportation around neighborhoods such as walking and bicycling.

Implementation Strategies

1. Continue to support the concept of neighborhood schools, recognizing the important function they play in community identity. (Obj. A)
2. Continue to foster the neighborhood councils by expanding their role and developing neighborhood specific plans. (Obj. A)
3. Research the efforts of other communities and implement programs to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of our older neighborhoods. (Obj. E)

4. Develop planning strategies to guide commercial development, community redevelopment and infill development while preserving neighborhood stability and property values. (Obj. A, E)
5. Revise the County zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance to encourage, where appropriate, sidewalks and greenways throughout new residential developments and connecting neighborhoods and commercial and institutional areas. (Obj. F, G, H)
6. As we work to preserve the more rural areas of Roanoke County, revise the zoning ordinance to allow slightly higher infill development in existing neighborhoods. (Obj. A, B, C, E)
7. Continue to seek community input on all rezoning requests. (Obj. A, E)
8. Encourage community meetings for all rezoning requests. (Obj. A, E)
9. Make the necessary revisions to the zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance to allow by right, cluster developments and mixed use developments, where appropriate. (Obj. A, B, C, E)
10. Identify substandard housing and seek solutions to alleviate these conditions. (Obj. D)
11. Research the need for housing maintenance regulations to mitigate problems with unkempt property. Develop, if necessary, appropriate regulations. (Obj. D, E)

4. QUALITY OF LIFE

Introduction

To the residents that call Roanoke County home, this is a community with a distinctive character and an abundance of natural beauty. There exists a very intrinsic relationship between the natural resources that exist here - the mountains and ridgetops, forests and streams and breathtaking scenic views - and people's perception of quality of life here in the County.

In a citizen survey, conducted in early 1995, the majority of County residents said there is a high quality of life in Roanoke County and they are very interested in protecting that. For many people this quality of life manifests itself in the natural beauty and scenic resources of this area. Others appreciate the relatively low cost of living, the lack of formidable transportation and commuting problems and the high quality of public education. For whatever reasons, and there is a myriad of them ranging from low crime, good schools and scenic beauty to low cost of housing and cultural opportunities, the citizens of Roanoke County are very interested in protecting their quality of life.

During the visioning process many citizens expressed concern that those things that make Roanoke County "special" could vanish all too quickly without the proper long-range planning. Without well managed growth and development, we could trade in a sense of place and authenticity for a feeling of sameness and homogenization. Steadily and perceptibly, we could lose the distinctive qualities that trigger people's desires to live here, work here and visit here.

There are real and legitimate needs for jobs, tax revenues, a diversified local economy and housing opportunities. Yet there is also the recognition that we need to find more effective strategies that will enable our community to grow in ways that enhance and protect rather than degrade and threaten the quality of life that lends us distinction and character.

Goal

To achieve and maintain the highest possible quality of life for the citizens of Roanoke County.

Issues and Opportunities

The scenic beauty of Roanoke County is a major contributing factor to the high quality of life here.

- Other factors influencing the high quality of life include the low crime rate, relatively low cost of housing, ease of commuting and high quality public and private school systems.

- The citizens of Roanoke County place high value on the importance of their quality of life and are very protective of it.
- Many newer residents of the County have lived in other places where the quality of life may not have been as high or they experienced the degradation of that quality of life.
- The economic base of the county needs to continue to grow to support an increased demand for and cost of services such as public education.
- The existing rules and regulations for land development do not allow enough flexibility and creativity nor do they require site resource conservation.
- Neighborhood street design standards require excessive cut, fill and tree removal.
- Roanoke County has implemented a tree protection ordinance for public properties but does not have a tree protection ordinance for private lands.
- The existing zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance do not have the mechanisms to protect mountainsides and ridgelines from inappropriate development.
- The School Board Blue Ribbon Committee has made extensive recommendations concerning physical facilities, which, if adequately funded, will help ensure the continuation of high-quality public schools in the County.
- Roanoke County has maintained, to the extent possible, the concept of neighborhood schools.
- The citizens of Roanoke County believe that the people here are basically friendly.
- Roanoke County is considered a good place to retire due to factors such as cost of living.
- Parks and greenways are seen as important quality of life issues.
- Automobile travel, including commuting to and from work during peak hours of the work day, is relatively easy.
- Parent/teacher associations enjoy a high level of participation at the elementary school level, sometimes approaching one-hundred percent.

Objectives

- A. Preserve the scenic beauty of the County while balancing the need for economic growth.

- B. Promote the location of clean, high-technology research and development firms in the Roanoke Valley.
- C. Maintain the concept of neighborhood schools.
- D. Provide access to community parks and greenways to all citizens.
- E. Provide cultural and recreational opportunities to citizens of all ages.
- F. Promote the use of good traffic planning concepts.
- G. Preserve, where appropriate, existing trees and encourage the planting of tree species that are native to the Blue Ridge region.
- H. Encourage innovation and creativity in land development.

Implementation Strategies

- 1. Develop and adopt more stringent regulations and incentives to protect natural resources in the County - including mountainsides, ridgetops, streams, rivers, viewsheds, open space, wetlands, forests, soils and wildlife. (Obj. A, E, G, H)
- 2. Ensure that future growth and development is consistent with the adopted Community Plan and enhances the quality of life of Roanoke County citizens. (Obj. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H)
- 3. Modify and enhance design guidelines, incorporating incentives where feasible, to be applied to all future residential, commercial and industrial developments. (Obj. A, H)
- 4. Continue funding and support of the greenway system and develop a dedicated source of funding to support the system. (Obj. D)
- 5. Fully implement the recommendations of the School Board Blue Ribbon Committee for school construction and maintenance needs. (Obj. C)
- 6. Revise the neighborhood street design standards to give liveability, pedestrian/bicycle and retail friendly aspects equal footing with ease of traffic movements. (Obj. F)
- 7. Adopt a tree protection ordinance that applies to private properties. (Obj. A, G)
- 8. Ensure that future commercial and industrial parks receiving financial or tax incentives from the County are built as park-like environments and include strict design guidelines, greenways and open space. (Obj. B, D, H)

9. Revise the subdivision ordinance to encourage the dedication of greenway easements at the time a subdivision is platted. (Obj. D)
10. Continue to support and participate in the regional land trust - a publicly-supported charitable organization providing a voluntary means to promote the preservation of natural and cultural resources - and other statewide and national land trusts. (Obj. A, E, H)
11. Continue to provide a variety of housing options in a broad range of prices. (Obj. H)
12. Through zoning ordinance revisions, allow for increased housing density, while requiring the dedication of open space. (Obj. A, D, E, H)
13. Encourage the development and re-development of lands served by public utilities while discouraging through zoning ordinance revisions the development of lands without these services. (Obj. A, H)
14. Continue to preserve the nature and stability of existing single-family neighborhoods but allow infill development, appropriately designed, at slightly higher densities. (Obj. H)
15. Continue to work cooperatively with, and provide financial support to, cultural and recreational organizations which provide invaluable opportunities to County residents. (Obj. E)
16. Expand the Roanoke County park system so that neighborhood parks are accessible to all citizens. (Obj. D, E)
17. Expand and enhance the County-wide road beautification efforts. (Obj. A, G)

5. REGIONALISM

Introduction

Roanoke County is one of several local government units that make up the Roanoke Valley. The high quality of life that Roanoke County citizens have come to expect and deserve can continue and grow only if we practice, in a proactive manner, broad-based collaboration and cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions. Roanoke County should take the lead in these endeavors.

As we move into the next century, we need to begin to think of this geographic area as a cohesive unit rather than as many, often competing, parts. Many of the challenges of the twenty first century will know no geographic boundary line and will present all Valley citizens and local officials with opportunities to seek efficient and effective solutions. Critical issues such as economic development, natural resource preservation, transportation, cultural opportunities and housing require a regional perspective and regional solutions. We must find new and innovative ways to work together for the good of all.

Goal

To work in cooperation with all local jurisdictions to provide the highest quality services, in the most efficient and effective manner, to Roanoke County citizens.

Issues and Opportunities

- The formation of the New Century Council presents the opportunity to look outside our own county limits and develop a strong economic base that is competitive in the global marketplace.
- A coordinated regional approach is needed to attract high-quality targeted industries.
- The scenic beauty of this region is largely attributed to the mountains. Many of the significant mountain ridges and ranges extend beyond the boundaries of the County.
- The Roanoke Valley has the unique opportunity to develop a world-class bikeway and greenway system that is interjurisdictional and interconnected.
- The road infrastructure between the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County is very interconnected due to the “doughnut” configuration of the two localities.
- The County has many intergovernmental projects with the Town of Vinton, the Cities of Roanoke and Salem, Botetourt County and other neighboring jurisdictions such as fire and rescue facilities, libraries, sewer treatment plant and the airport.

Objectives

- A. Preserve the scenic beauty and natural resources of Roanoke County and the greater Roanoke Valley.
- B. Attract high-technology research and development firms to the Roanoke Valley.
- C. Promote a cooperative working relationship with neighboring jurisdictions.
- D. Promote communication and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions on planning issues.
- E. Promote Roanoke County and the greater Roanoke Valley as a tourist destination.
- F. Continue to participate in joint projects with neighboring jurisdictions to provide services to County citizens - such as communication facilities, libraries, fire and rescue facilities and water and sewer lines - in the most efficient manner.

Implementation Strategies

- 1. Fully support and participate in the New Century Council. (Obj. A, B, C, D, E, F)
- 2. Continue to support and participate in the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission. (Obj. A, C, D, E)
- 3. Implement regional cellular tower policies to protect the region's viewsheds and mountaintops. (Obj. A, D)
- 4. Continue to support and participate in the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership and the Industrial Development Authority. (Obj. B)
- 5. Continue to support and participate in the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau. (Obj. E)
- 6. Continue to notify adjoining localities when rezoning petitions impact property at the mutual boundaries. (Obj. D)
- 7. Continue to meet jointly with the governing bodies of adjoining jurisdictions. (Obj. C, D, F)
- 8. Encourage the Planning Commission to meet jointly, on an annual rotating basis, with planning commissions from adjoining jurisdictions as is currently done with City of Roanoke and the Town of Vinton. (Obj. C, D, F)
- 9. Continue to work cooperatively with the Fifth Planning District Commission on regional

planning projects. (Obj. C, D, F)

10. Continue to support and participate in regional, statewide and national land trusts. (Obj. A, C, D, E)
11. Seek opportunities to work with other jurisdictions to attract high-quality, clean, research and development firms to this region. Share in the costs of infrastructure and share the generated revenue. (Obj. B)
12. Expand the Roanoke County park system so that neighborhood parks are accessible to all citizens. (Obj. A, E)
13. Expand and enhance the County-wide road beautification efforts. (Obj. A)

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Introduction

Economic development is a dynamic public program in Roanoke County. This activity is defined as, “the process of creating wealth through the mobilization of human, financial, capital, physical, and natural resources to generate marketable goods and services.” The economic development process is of critical importance to the continued high quality of life in Roanoke County and the ability of the County to provide a high level of public services to citizens. Roanoke County’s economic development mission is:

“To attract and retain to the County quality jobs and investment that diversify the economy, broaden the tax base, and provide long-term employment opportunities for area residents.”

Roanoke County established an economic development program in 1985 and implemented an economic development strategy to establish the initial goals and objectives for implementation. Subsequently, the Board of Supervisors re-adopted an economic development strategy in 1987 and 1989, with business plans being adopted annually thereafter.

The Economic Development 5-Year Business Plan FY 2001-2006 adopted in July of 2000 was intended to complement the Economic Development Strategy and the 1985 Comprehensive Plan. The Business Plan focused on four economic opportunity areas into which economic activity would be promoted. The emphasis was to identify potential commercial and industrial sites that could be developed and marketed by the County as “product” for economic development opportunities, and then to attract new businesses to those sites. A series of public actions, including proposed capital improvements, rezonings and coordination with VDOT primary and secondary road planning were recommended to implement the Business Plan.

The Plan sets forth details of implementation activities and impact measures for the primary program areas of marketing and business recruitment, product development business retention and expansion and community/workforce development. The economic development goals and objectives are generally described below.

- 1. To market the County’s industrial/commercial property and attract compatible business and industry to the community, and to increase the commercial and industrial tax base and related employment opportunities.**
- 2. To encourage the retention and growth of local enterprise by creating and maintaining a positive business climate countywide.**
- 3. To create and maintain a marketable inventory of quality industrial/commercial real property sufficient to meet market demand.**
- 4. To promote and encourage regional participation in economic development activities, programs and services.**

Issues and Opportunities

- Competition among land uses for developable land: There is a limited amount of developable land in Roanoke County. Residential uses and tax-exempt activities are the major land uses competing with economic development for developable land. Potential commercial and industrial sites need to be identified, rezoned and reserved for future development.
- Identify economic opportunity areas: The 1992 Economic Development Strategy delineated the I-81 corridor, North County/Hollins Road, the Route 460 East Corridor, West County, Explore Park and the Southwest County/419 Corridor as economic opportunity areas. Since 1992, significant economic development activities have occurred in these areas. The following activities have occurred in the implementation of the Economic Development Strategy, and Business Plan:

I-81 Corridor – Coordinate with VDOT and Community Development to evaluate the impact on economic opportunity areas and ensure the preservation, creation and enhancement of marketable commercial/industrial property. Participate in interchange design and land use and coordinate any public policy changes necessary to encourage development in these areas.

North County/Hollins Road – The Hollins Road area development included the expansion of a Country Inn & Suites, a renovation of a Days Inn and the planned construction of a new Fairfield Inn. Staff continues to monitor and evaluate the interchange realignment at exit #146 for proposed I-81 development opportunities.

Route 460 East Corridor – The Valley Gateway Business Park and industrial shell building showed significant activity with the sale of 42 acres to Integrity Windows for a 200,000 s.f. manufacturing facility, employing 350 people, and a project investment of \$32 million. The shell building was contracted by a developer who seeks to occupy the facility with a suitable industrial tenant. Commercial development was also active with the attraction of a Wal-Mart Super Center, and a Lowe's Home Improvement Center. Staff will continue to identify and market developable property in this area to include the remaining Valley Gateway property and the Jack Smith Industrial Park.

West County – Phase I development of the County owned 456-acre Center for Research and Technology has been completed. Glenmary Drive has been reconstructed, and utility and road extensions along Corporate Circle have been implemented. Engineering design and related improvements to Phase II development have been also been completed and include a second extension of Corporate Circle, utility lines, the construction of a regional storm water management basin, lighting installation, and landscaping enhancements. Additionally, Novozymes Biologicals, a manufacturer of enzymes for agricultural products was recruited to the CRT as the first tenant in the Center. Their initial investment was \$12 million with the creation of 25 new jobs for a research and development and administration office. Their Phase II manufacturing facility is planned for construction in 2004.

Southwest County/419 corridor - New investment/construction included several commercial enterprises such as the 419 West Restaurant, Carlo's Brazilian Restaurant, Ruby Tuesday's and Fink's Jewelers. Other commercial developments occurred along Brambleton Avenue with Gold's Gym, Freddie's Sunset Grill, Blue Magnolia Restaurant and a Martin German Imports vehicle sales operation. Activity along Route 220 included a new Land Rover, Mercedes, Volvo and Jaguar dealership and the implementation of a 220 Clearbrook corridor overlay district.

Maps of the Economic Opportunity Areas are included in this section. These maps include existing commercial and industrial areas and potential economic opportunity sites for future use. Economic Opportunity Areas are intended to provide for future economic development, conform to future land use designations and be an overlay on the land use maps of the Community Plan.

- Product development for sites and buildings: Roanoke County needs an inventory of commercial and industrial sites in order to successfully compete in economic development. The identification of potential sites is the initial step in the process of converting an undeveloped property into a "ready to go" commercial or industrial site. The Industrial Development Authority of Roanoke County implemented a rezoning study of potential commercial and industrial sites in 1995-96 and rezoned 117 acres for such uses. While many of the county's commercial and industrial properties are now zoned appropriately, they are not considered to be "ready to go sites," due to the numerous development challenges that continue to exist on these sites. The Department of Economic Development remains actively involved in the Capital Improvement Plan process by recommending specific improvement projects for funding that will create ready to go sites for development. Many of these sites will not be developed until significant capital infrastructure improvements are undertaken by the County.

Historically, Roanoke County has initiated the location of publicly owned industrial parks such as Valley TechPark (177 acres) and the Roanoke County Center for Research and Technology (456 acres), and has participated as a partner in the development of Valley Pointe (52 acres in Phase I), Valley Gateway (108 acres), the Jack Smith Industrial Park (68 acres), and the Vinton Business Center (99 acres). Roanoke County also participated with The Greater Roanoke Valley Development Foundation to construct a 75,000 foot expandable shell building in Valley Gateway, and is participating with the development of Valley Pointe Phase II (180 acres). The County's role is to provide marketable commercial and industrial sites and buildings so that we can respond favorably and promptly to inquiries proposing expansions and relocations.

- Targeting business and industry: The Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership markets the Roanoke Valley as a business location and serves as a point of contact for companies seeking to relocate to or expand within the Valley. The Partnership has targeted automotive and transportation related, wireless communications, printing, biosciences/life sciences, medical devices, large office and corporate headquarters. Roanoke County concurs with this list and adds large commercial projects and technology based companies that pay salaries and wages in excess of the median wage rate for the region.

- Using quality measures to evaluate economic development opportunities: The series of community workshops held in the planning areas of the County confirmed that the quality of economic development is important to the citizens. If Roanoke County desires to continue to take advantage of its' premier location for retail, commercial and industrial growth which expands the tax base and creates new economic opportunity for it's citizens, then it must be accepted that land uses and zoning designations must logically change over time to accommodate this activity. It is however vitally important to consider the appearance of the proposed projects and the impacts on the local community when considering new projects in areas adjacent to existing residential areas. Economic considerations should not be the determining criteria for evaluating land use, rather it should be one of many factors considered as the County goes through its natural progression of economic growth. Roanoke County has a history of protecting the rights of its citizens and our natural resources that make this area a destination for families and businesses as evidenced by the following projects. Roanoke County pursued a design "charette" with the citizens residing adjacent to both the Vinton Business Center and the Roanoke County Center for Research and Technology. This process has resulted in a Master Plan that the County and Town recently qualified by hiring a marketing firm to review the economic feasibility of the various land uses proposed in the Master Plan. Retention of natural vegetation, site and building design criteria, open space preservation and the adoption of protective and restrictive covenants are some of the quality measures adopted in the Master Plan process which will not be compromised as development occurs.
- Assisting economic development through its public private partnerships: Roanoke County has adopted a public-private partnership policy to assist businesses with expansion and relocation opportunities. The policy was revised and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2002, which expanded the flexibility of the program to allow for incentives to be offered for retail businesses that provide significant revenue for Roanoke County. This action signifies the value of retail business operations and their positive impact on the County. Funds are annually appropriated to an economic development fund and administered for projects in accordance with the policy, which gives staff the ability to offer incentives to targeted businesses. The County will consider financing eligible public improvements and employee training costs as a partnership if there is a "payback" or return on investment from new taxes/fees generated by a commercial or industrial project. Typical partnerships involve extensions of water and sewer service and related utility connection fees. All projects are subject to the execution of a performance agreement between the County and the private entity to insure that a proposed development meets its investment goals. Partnership agreements are audited by the County staff to determine if the projected taxes and fees are being generated by a partnership project.
- Business Retention & Expansion: Roanoke County carries out an ongoing existing business visitation program to companies located within the County. These visits provide a confidential update of a company's products, markets, operations and growth potential. The goal is to retain and facilitate expanded investment and employment within Roanoke County. Existing businesses are eligible for public-private partnership assistance. The Economic Development staff also coordinates district roundtables, hosts a Business Partners TV show, and publishes a business newsletter. Coordination with other County

offices and State and Federal agencies to address issues raised by existing businesses is also a function of this program.

- Redevelopment Efforts: Roanoke County encourages redevelopment through a broad based community development approach that includes citizens, business and the County as partners. The County recognizes that redevelopment efforts should be primarily private sector driven, but is often approached with the involvement of both the public and private sectors. For example, Tanglewood Mall is in a state of decline due to high vacancy rates, and County staff is partnering with the mall management to offer assistance in attracting quality retailers as tenants.

County Staff is also assisting the Town of Vinton with revitalization efforts for their downtown area, and continues to support the marketing and development of the Vinton Business Center. Staff will also be participating in Vinton's comprehensive planning process in 2003.

Redevelopment efforts for the 460 corridor in West Salem have been delayed due to VDOT's postponing of a significant road widening project in this area. Delays have occurred due to funding considerations, and staff is prepared to assist with this project once funding is restored, and the project is renewed. The Dixie Caverns interchange at Exit #132 off of I-81 and the Hollins Exit #146 are also areas concentration for future development opportunities. Staff will continue to monitor and evaluate the land uses in these areas, and the corridor study to implement a work plan for future development/redevelopment initiatives. In many County redevelopment efforts, public monies are used to leverage private funds for property improvement and development. County staff serves as a partner and a facilitator in these projects, assisting all parties with accomplishing their goals.

- Assisting business startups, small business development and Workforce training: The Economic Development staff has many contacts in both the public and private sectors. The Commonwealth of Virginia, the Department of Business Assistance (DBA), the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), the New Century Venture Center, regional agencies (such as TAP), local colleges and universities and the regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC) are available to assist citizens seeking to start a business. County staff offers referrals to these resources, which contributes to the growth of new businesses in Roanoke County.

Objectives

- A. Strengthen existing business retention efforts and assist companies with expansion opportunities within Roanoke County.
- B. Attract new industry to the County that will enhance and diversify the industrial base.
- C. Identify potential commercial and industrial sites and pursue opportunities to add these properties to the "product" inventory of the County.

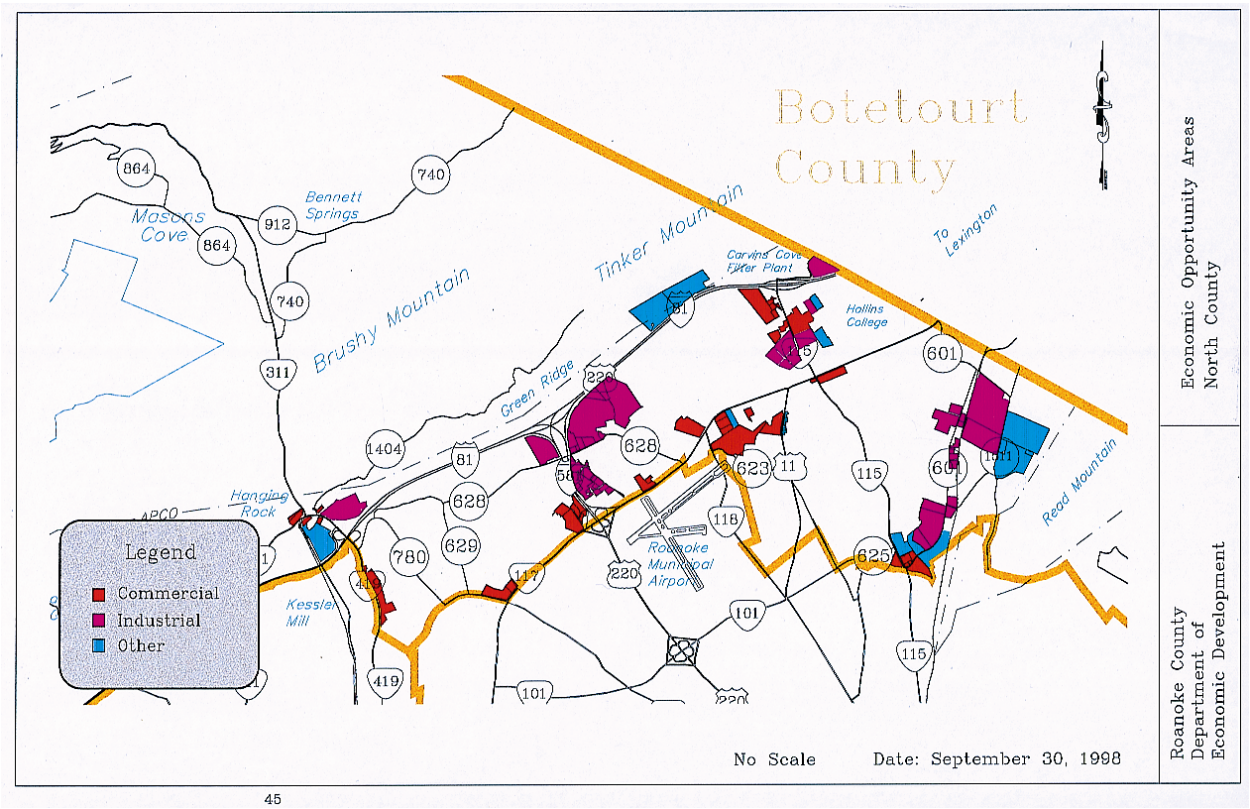
- D. Increase public awareness of business activities and their role in the economic base of Roanoke County.
- E. Identify areas for community development projects that will allow the citizens, businesses and County to jointly improve a geographic area.
- F. Identify potential public-private partnerships that will enhance economic development in Roanoke County.
- G. Evaluate and regulate the appearance of new commercial and industrial development, especially those developments adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods.

Implementation Strategies

1. Implement the economic development program areas described in the Economic Development Business Plan including Business Retention and Expansion, Business Attraction, Product Development and Regional Cooperation. (Obj. A, B, C, D, E, F,)
2. Implement all three development phases of the Roanoke County Center for Research and Technology. (Obj. B, C, F)
3. Identify sites and opportunities for future business park development. (Obj. C, E)
4. Continue to monitor the I-81 Widening Project and the I-73 development process for economic opportunities. (Obj. C, E)
5. Redevelop the West Main Street (Route 460) corridor. (Obj. A, D, E, F)
6. Continue the land acquisition program to identify, reserve and rezone Economic Opportunity Areas for future development needs. (Obj. C)
7. Development of regional publicly owned business parks. (Obj. A, B, C, D, F)
8. Develop design guidelines for new commercial retail developments including “big box” retail structures, traditional shopping centers and the newer “life style” centers. Develop design guidelines for new industrial projects on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the location of existing residential developments and valuable natural resources such as the Blue Ridge Parkway viewshed. The appropriateness of the design and the extent to which the developer is sensitive to the above mentioned items will be used as criteria when considering the use of financial incentives to spur development.

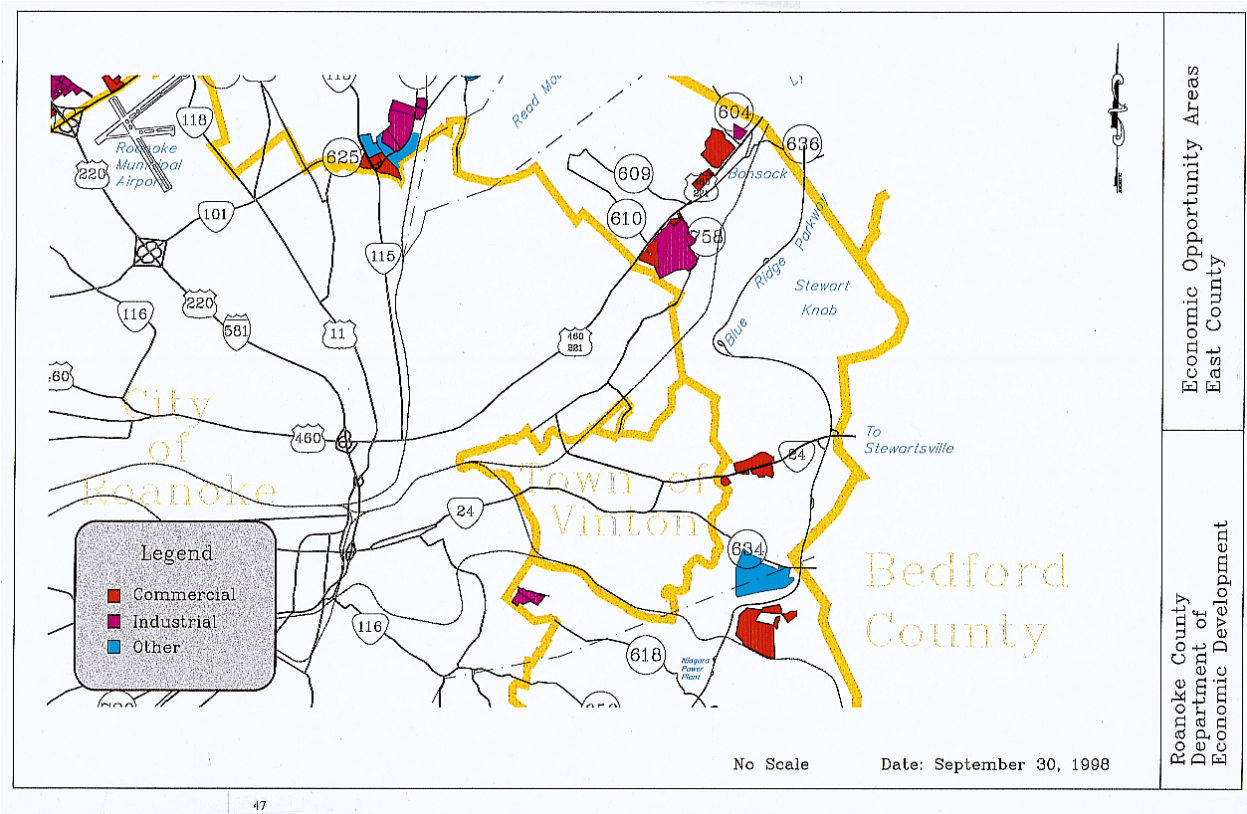
The following Economic Opportunity Area maps include existing commercial and industrial areas and potential economic opportunity sites for future use. The blue areas identified on these maps as “Other” are areas that have not been specifically identified at this time as future commercial or industrial areas. They are areas where, based upon their location, access or topography, some potential for future economic opportunity exists.

Economic Opportunity Area Map - North County



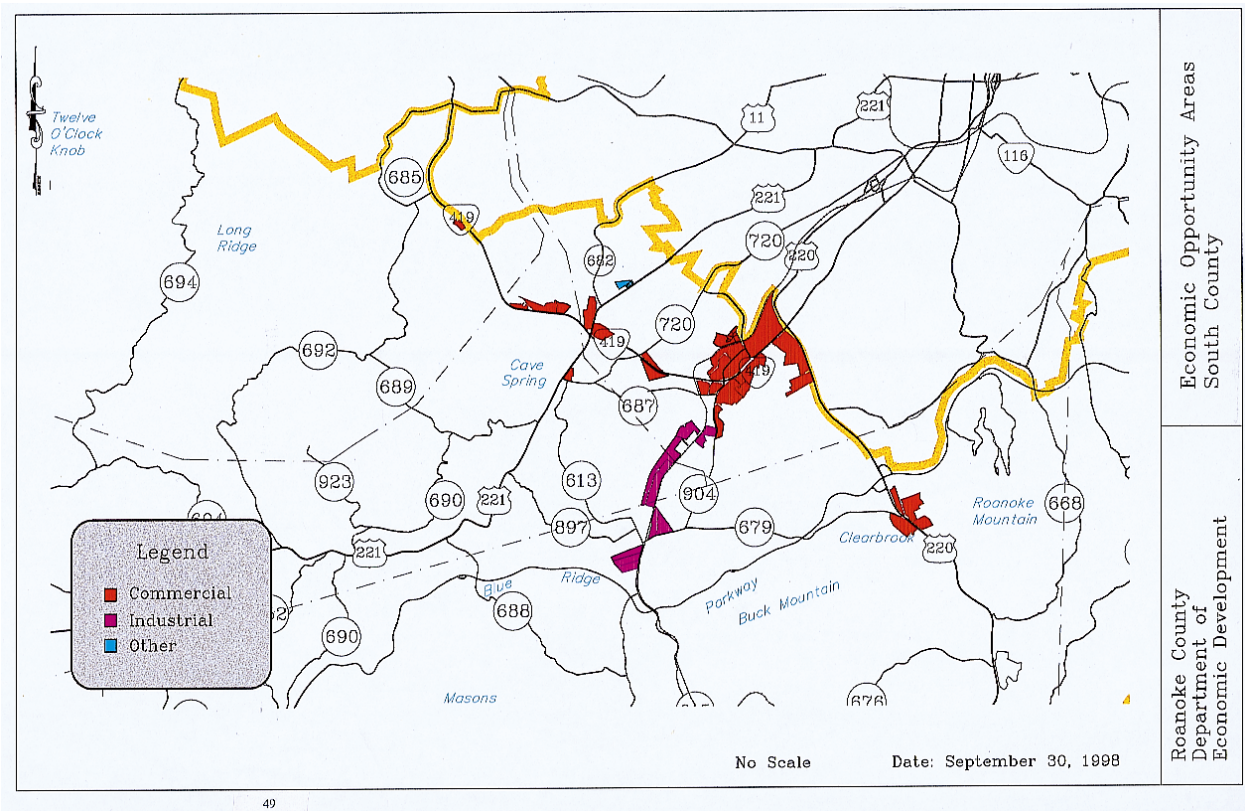
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Economic Opportunity Area Map - East County



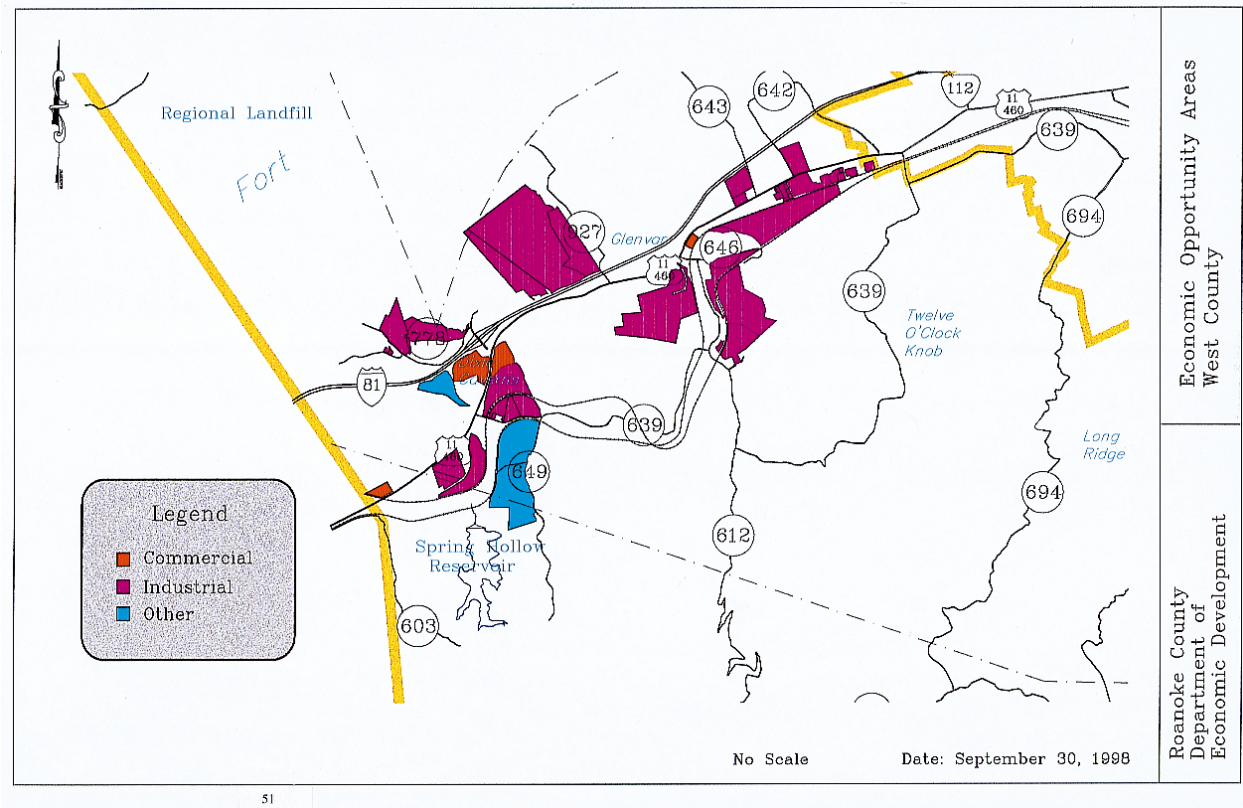
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Economic Opportunity Area Map - South County



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Economic Opportunity Area Map - West County



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7. GROWTH MANAGEMENT & CAPITAL FACILITIES PLANNING

GOAL: To protect, preserve, enhance and effectively and efficiently utilize Roanoke County resources by:

- Guiding future growth and development to areas where land uses, facilities and infrastructure exist and are planned
- Promoting compact and contiguous development and infill development
- Focusing County infrastructure funding on these current and designated future development areas
- Protecting and enhancing the following resources: historic, cultural, agricultural, forestry, water, recreational and scenic.

INTRODUCTION

The growth management goal is to direct development into designated areas that have or will have the capacity to accommodate future growth. This goal will facilitate efficient service delivery in those areas while preserving rural resources in outlying areas.

To further this goal, the County land use map should delineate three areas of growth potential: 1) the primary growth areas of the County that are currently served by public water and sewer and where the majority of new growth should be encouraged; 2) the “future growth” areas directly adjacent to the primary growth area that should accommodate outward growth over a 5-year period of time and where the extension of public water and sewer can relatively efficiently be accomplished; 3) the rural areas where growth should be discouraged and public water and sewer services should not be extended. It must be recognized that the future growth areas should be periodically reviewed and updated.

While it is the goal of Roanoke County to focus new development in those areas that currently have existing infrastructure and services it is recognized that some level of outward growth is necessary. To accommodate this outward growth in a manner that does not diminish the quality of life of current residents of these areas, the timing of new developments must be carefully orchestrated to coincide with the construction of public facilities and services to meet the needs of current and future citizens.

The growth management goal is clearly intended to discourage development in the rural areas of Roanoke County and recognizes that incompatible development in these areas of the County is costly both in terms of service delivery and the irreversible damage to critical resources.

In order to implement the growth management goals it should be recognized that the provision of adequate public infrastructure and services to those areas designated to receive growth is a critical component. The growth management goals of Roanoke

County can only be achieved if needed capital facilities improvements are timed and coordinated to accommodate future growth. Conversely, it must be recognized that the inefficiencies of providing these same public services to dispersed rural populations is not in the overall public interest. The provision of public facilities and services requires significant public funding for construction, operation and long-term maintenance. The County should ensure that the highest benefit is provided to County citizens in exchange for this cost.

In order to achieve the stated growth management goals, future emphasis should be placed on providing public service delivery to those designated growth areas where future development should be directed. To accomplish this, public facilities and services should be provided at a much higher level in these growth areas than in the non-growth or rural areas.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH AREAS

Primary growth areas - those areas currently served by public water and sewer and where the majority of new growth should be encouraged - include the following land use designations: Principal Industrial, Core, Transition, Development and Neighborhood Conservation.

Future growth areas – those areas adjacent to primary growth areas where outward growth over the next 5 years should be accommodated – include the following land use designations: Development and to a limited extent Village Center.

These growth areas must be attractive places to live and work. Development in these areas should be more efficient and at higher densities than in the past in order to help prevent sprawl development and keep suburban development patterns from encroaching into rural areas. The continuation of low-density suburban areas should not be encouraged in designated growth areas. Design strategies should be developed to ensure that these growth areas are harmonious with surrounding areas but may include different uses and different densities than those surrounding areas. Careful design of these growth areas should result in development that is beneficial to the community.

1. The majority of new residential growth in the County should be in designated primary and future growth areas.
2. Development within the growth areas should have public water and sewer.
3. Rezoning of property within these designated primary and future growth areas should consider and address the impacts on public facilities and services that would result from the rezoning.
4. The residential growth areas should be developed at densities that allow efficient use of the land. Gross densities should be increased.

5. Design of residential growth areas should reflect the following principles:
 - a. Transportation – Neighborhood streets (both public and private) should be of a scale that complements the area, should incorporate landscaping and should encourage walking and biking. Private streets, and public streets in accordance with VDOT guidelines, should be designed to calm traffic. Sidewalks and paths should be provided for pedestrians.
 - b. Parks and Open Space – To compensate for increased residential densities parks and open space should be incorporated into the design. Environmental resources such as floodplains, slopes and forested areas should be protected.

6. Steep slopes – New development, infill development and redevelopment on slopes between 10% and 33% should be sensitive to existing grades and where possible should promote architectural design elements that work with, rather than against, these grades. Develop design guidelines and regulations for development on steep slopes. These should include provisions for “slope maintenance bonds”, and should determine a slope above which development should not be allowed. The precise slope percentage should be determined after more research and analysis is conducted but should be specified in the future zoning ordinance amendment.

7. Infill development – new development on vacant lots within urbanized/suburbanized areas - should be encouraged. Design guidelines should be developed to:
 - a. allow flexibility in housing location, type and density;
 - b. provide flexibility in lot size, configuration, and vehicle access to facilitate infill development;
 - c. provide clear development standards that promote compatibility between new and existing development;
 - d. encourage development of needed housing in close proximity to employment and services;
 - e. promote neighborhood preservation and enhancement through redevelopment of underutilized properties;
 - f. encourage mixed use development to complete neighborhoods and provide housing close to jobs and commerce;

A policy that considers encouraging infill development should address accessory dwellings, flag lots, shared driveway policies, frontage requirements, setbacks and parking requirements.

8. Public improvements, needed to support and encourage infill development, should be scheduled in a timely fashion in order to be incorporated into new developments.
9. Neighborhood Commercial Centers – Properties suitable for low to

moderate intensity retail sales and services – along collector and arterial roads – should be inventoried and rezoned to Neighborhood Commercial. Small, neighborhood commercial areas should be developed to enhance the residential development and should connect to the residential area. Mixed uses – shops, offices, civic and cultural spaces – should be encouraged. Densities should be increased by encouraging the mix of residential uses, office uses and retail uses.

The current Neighborhood Commercial District standards should be modified as follows:

- a) Total District Size: increase from current maximum of 3 acres
- b) Permitted Uses: expand commercial uses allowed (retail) and consider including limited residential
- c) Strengthen use and design standards including site development, lighting, landscaping, signage and maximum square footage requirements
- d) Revise minimum parking requirements and establish maximum parking requirements in the District; revise shared parking limitations
- e) Encourage public uses within this District such as public branch libraries, police sub-stations, etc.

In addition, the Community Plan should address the issue of allowing higher-density residential in the immediate neighborhoods surrounding these identified Neighborhood Commercial Districts.

10. Commercial development should encourage vehicular and pedestrian connections to nearby neighborhoods and should avoid strip, linear designs.

11. Revise the Cluster Development ordinance. Address the following sections:

- a. Street and Access Requirements including: 1) length of private streets; 2) number of dwelling units allowed on any single private street; and 3) private street design requirements.
- b. Conservation Areas, Primary and Secondary: review and clarify definitions including section relating to slope.
- c. Open Space Requirements and the relationship to lots and property lines.

12. In compliance with the ozone Early Action Plan, Roanoke County should adopt a 40% tree canopy coverage (calculated at ultimate growth of trees) as a target for all new development. Encourage developers to site structures and parking lots around stands of mature trees and where needed, require the replacement of trees. Recognize the important role trees lay in air quality, aesthetics and cooling.

13. Develop corridor studies for future commercial areas including Route 220 South, Route 221 and Route 460 west.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RURAL AREAS

Rural growth areas – those areas where growth should be discouraged – include the following land use designations: Rural Village, Rural Preserve, Conservation and to some extent Village Center. Roanoke County should make a commitment to preserve its rural areas. Without this, we will see the continued fragmentation of large parcels of land and the conversion to residential development. This pattern results in a declining agricultural economy, the loss of plant and wildlife habitats, and the loss of natural resources and the rural character of much of Roanoke County. The subdivision of rural lands for single-family residences has serious implications for resource conservation and the preservation of the rural character.

The outlying more rural areas of Roanoke County are currently zoned to allow minimum lot sizes of 1-3 acres. These lot sizes are not conducive or sufficient for viable agricultural, forestry or conservation land uses. The only thing these small lot sizes do is encourage the steady spread of a basically suburban land pattern and character in historically rural areas. The consequence is the irreversible loss of rural lands and the loss of natural, scenic and historic landscapes. In addition, rural residential land development requires increased delivery of public services.

To be consistent with the growth management goals of Roanoke County, the policies that allow the continued development and fragmentation of rural lands should be changed. It should be recognized that the most effective tools for protecting rural lands are those that discourage development from occurring in the first place and provide permanent protection of the land. Any land use regulations that allow residential development in the rural areas, even at much less density, will reduce fragmentation and density impacts but not eliminate them. Having said that, the goal is not to eliminate all residential development in the rural areas of Roanoke County but to recognize the impacts this development pattern has and to address the location, character and extent of this development in order to minimize the harmful impacts. The following policies are recommended:

1. Encourage land protection and conservation in rural areas. Recognize that tools such as conservation easements are the most cost-effective solution to protecting rural lands.
2. Decrease residential density in rural areas. Revise the AR, AG-1 and AG-3 zoning district site development regulations to address the issue of lot averaging and the concerns of land fragmentation and density related impacts.
3. Permit and or require clustering of rural residential development for subdivisions of 5 lots or greater. This should encourage a more efficient land development pattern and retain all the development potential that would be available under a conventional development standard. The benefits of this program to the

landowner are reduced development costs, more marketable lots, and the preservation of substantial portions of land. Citizens would gain the benefits of permanent preservation of large tracts of land that could be used for agricultural or forestry uses, recreational uses and the preservation of water, natural or scenic resources. Many issues need to be considered in developing standards for a rural cluster program. The protection of the natural environment should be ensured. A minimum size of the preservation parcel should be determined. The standards should ensure that a minimum amount of land is used for residential development. With that though, and in keeping with the growth management goals of Roanoke County, the use of rural cluster developments should not be a justification to extend public water and sewer to these rural areas. In order for this program to work, alternatives for wastewater treatment and water supply should be considered that would allow reduced lot sizes for the residential parcels and, thereby, allowing significant portions of land to be available as preservation parcels.

4. Proactively manage the extension of water and sewer services. Recognize that the availability of public water and sewer, among other things, greatly influences the development and density of land. Sewer pump stations have made the extension of public sewer feasible to areas of the County where it would not otherwise be. Staff has mapped recommended “future growth” areas, contiguous to the current utility services boundary, that should accommodate growth over the next 5 year period of time. Within this future growth area Section 15.2-2232 public review will not be required for the extension of water and sewer services. Outside and beyond these future growth areas, staff is recommending that no new utility lines be extended, no new pump stations be built and no new community well systems be allowed without the benefit of a Section 15.2-2232 public review.
5. Consider adopting a set of design guidelines and recommendations for future improvements to rural roads. Also, consider adopting the Virginia Department of Transportation Rural Rustic Roads Program. This program for unpaved roads is designed to pave rural roads in a more environmentally friendly and less costly manner. This program uses existing road widths for road improvements, rather than increasing road widths and is designed for areas with limited growth.
6. Consider minimum private road development standards for very large lot rural residential development. Shared driveways, flag lots or lots with no frontage should also be considered to minimize the amount of road frontage required and the visual impact of residential development from the rural roads. These standards should apply to five or fewer lots.
7. Protect steep slopes and ridgelines. Develop design guidelines and regulations for development on steep slopes. These should include provisions for “slope maintenance bonds”, and should determine a slope above which development should not be allowed. The precise slope percentage should be determined after

more research and analysis is conducted but should be specified in the future zoning ordinance amendment.

8. Develop and implement a Mountain Zoning District. This proposed district should prohibit multi-family residential, commercial and industrial development within the district and provide limitations on clearing, grading, building height and distance from ridgeline for all other development. Specifics of this ordinance should be researched and analyzed after the adoption of the Community Plan.
9. Develop design standards for Rural Village Centers. Review the areas currently designated as Village Centers and, with community input, determine which should stay on the list, which should be removed and if new areas should be added. There may be areas that are currently designated Rural Village Centers that, given growth patterns, may be better suited as Development and rezoned to Neighborhood Commercial. In these cases, consideration should be given to the extension of public water and sewer to these areas. Rural Village Centers are rural locations where you would find small country stores, small family restaurants, schools, post offices and churches – those establishments that bring a sense of community to the surrounding countryside. These areas are not intended to be major employment centers for urban/suburban residents but rather to provide essential goods and services to the nearby rural residential community. These areas are often the rural crossroads. Design standards should consider the following: prohibit the creation of strip development along rural roads; appropriate scale of buildings; the re-use and renovation of existing buildings should be encouraged. Overall, rural design standards should be implemented not suburban design standards. It should be recognized that these rural village areas do not require the same signage, access, parking and lighting standards that more suburban and urban areas do.
10. Develop an ordinance to prohibit the clear-cutting of trees in certain zoning districts, under certain circumstances. Attention should be given to the provisions of State Code dealing with silviculture activities.